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ABSTRACT

In concurrent enrollment (CE) classes, academic and continuing education students enroll in courses that are held simultaneously, using the same classroom and instructors and having the same requirements and learning expectations. At North Harris College (NHC), in Texas, the introduction of CE was aided by a new strategic plan developed for the college in 1990 which reaffirmed NHC's commitment to excellence in a changing environment and the service of emerging, non-traditional needs in the new market. The first programs to initiate CE classes were offered in 1992 and included courses in the Physical Education, Fine Arts, and Business departments. At NHC, when partnerships are established between academic and continuing education courses, the academic instructor or associate dean designates a particular number of seats for CE students in the course. Benefits of CE at the college have included increased enrollment, which has resulted in offering some classes that would have been canceled otherwise; some students have transferred from CE classes to credit programs; and many CE students are professionals taking classes for advancement and can help other students. Problems have included convincing academic educators that continuing education is serious education, assuring lab supplies for CE students, and communicating information about CE sessions to adjunct faculty. (BCY)

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CHAMELEONS IN THE CLASSROOM:

MEETING STUDENTS' NEEDS THROUGH ACADEMIC AND CONTINUING EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

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Biography

Ms. Franks is Professor of Health, Physical Education/Kinesiology at North Harris College in Houston, Texas where she has been a faculty member since 1981. She teaches a variety of fitness and skill activities, in addition to a preparation course for Physical Education majors. Ms. Franks has served at North Harris College as the Intramural Director for five years, Director of the College Wellness Program for four years and as the Division Head for the past five years. This last year she returned to teaching full-time.

Ms. Franks is dedicated to excellence in instruction and worked on curriculum to make the North Harris College physical education program vital to the well-being of all College students. She is certified by the Aerobics Institute in Dallas as an Advance Fitness Specialist. She is a 1995 graduate of the Institute for Academic Leadership Development. Ms. Franks also contributes to educational issues in the community as her branch President of the American Association of University Women. She has chaired a committee that hosted a career fair for 350 middle school girls.

Pamala C. Dolezal is Interim Dean of Community Education at North Harris College overseeing a department which serves over 18,000 students annually. Prior to that she served as Senior Program Director for professional continuing education, languages, environmental technology, and other programs. She began in Community Education as an instructor in the English as a Second Language program where she developed the ESL Learning Center.

Ms. Dolezal serves on the Educational Programs Council and the CEU Task Force. She graduated from the NCCCA Institute for Academic Leadership Development in 1995. She is a member of Texas Administrators of Continuing Education, Texas Association of College Technical Educators, and Texas Association for Community Service and Continuing Education.

CHAMELEONS IN THE CLASSROOM: MEETING STUDENTS' NEEDS THROUGH ACADEMIC AND CONTINUING EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

INTRODUCTION

Concurrent enrollment has proven to be a winning situation for all involved: credit, continuing education (CE), and students. Simply stated, a concurrent enrollment class is one in which academic and CE students enroll for courses that are held simultaneously utilizing the same classroom and instructor with requirements and learning outcomes that are also the same. On the surface, a concurrent class would be no different than any other class. Only the infrastructure differs. Advanced planning for these classes along with a little experience provides an effective avenue for learning.

North Harris College began its concurrent enrollment courses by tapping only a few select classes. Some of the first classes to be offered were choir, band, and physical education. These offerings are popular in the community and in essence served as a draw to bring community members to the campus. Since a good band and choir rely largely on numbers, this also provided additional participants to strengthen the programs. The other area with early buy-in to concurrent enrollment was business. Introduction to Management and Human Resources Management were listed as continuing education classes with the same hours and dates as their academic counterparts. In addition, some one-night only CE classes were offered to coincide with specific lectures on the academic side. In this instance, the professor planned a particular lecture on a date such that a CE class on that topic was listed on the same date in the printed schedule. By the following semester, CE program directors were a little bolder in approaching the credit side of the house to offer concurrent enrollment, and every semester since, these courses have continued to increase in number of sections and in departmental expansion.

NOTE: As with any particular area, this methodology encompasses its own lingo. For the purpose of this presentation, the following terminology will be used. The term commonly used to describe this type of instruction is concurrent class or concurrent enrollment as defined in the opening paragraph. Another way of describing this program would be linked classes since indeed a community education class is "linked" to a credit class. Credit is used to define academic or technical classes or programs that are offered for college credit hours. Community education (CE) refers to the department which offers classes for non-college credit. These classes may be either vocational for continuing education units or leisure. One continuing education unit (CEU) is awarded for each ten contact hours of participation in an approved course. As more educational opportunities for workforce development are available and more

business/industry requirements for mandatory continuing education are requisite, CEUs will become more prevalent.

HISTORY

In 1990, North Harris College experienced a change in administration, leading to the proliferation of new initiatives and encouragement to 'think outside the box." Most changes are typically received with a lot of skepticism and a lengthy buy-in period so to ease this transition, a new strategic plan was created for the College:

- To renew the organization, its people, tools and processes in order to serve our constituents more effectively
- To reaffirm the College's commitment to excellence in a changing environment
- To expand and enrich service in the southern part of the College district while maintaining services to the more saturated northern sector
- To better serve the changing student population
- To better serve emerging, non-traditional needs in the "new market"

It became apparent that these initiatives created a value whereby college credit and non-college credit programs could possibly be linked together. The value of the educational process to non-college credit students was viewed as being as important as that to credit students. Many of the strategic goals are related to excellence of instruction in a changing environment with previously unserved areas. With concurrent enrollment, some students have had an opportunity to participate in college classes without the intimidation of failure, and therefore, can move into college credit classes or increase their skills for their work environments.

The experimental trial of linking CE with credit classes began in 1992 with the addition of a few sections in several departments which included: Physical Education, Fine Arts and Business. Students could enroll in these selected courses as a credit or CE student. There was a maximum number of CE students, ranging from one to five, accepted into each class. This would allow credit students to have priority registration. If the class was full with credit students, the CE students were not admitted. Within a year both the Fine Arts and the Physical Education Departments were allowing most of their sections to be concurrent enrollment classes.

Early buy-in was not always easy. One of the first hurdles was to convince academic educators that continuing education is real education and not the basket weaving classes of old. Continuing education is a serious approach for people who seek training and re-training. Why should CE duplicate the efforts of credit and thus set up competition within our own collegial boundaries? Would it not be more beneficial to combine efforts in serving students? And, by the way, who are these students we are serving? Those who register for concurrent enrollment classes may be professionals with degrees who want to gain knowledge in a particular area. Many times they are people who love life-long learning and want to continue to take classes, but have no interest in pursuing a degree. Most importantly, they are sometimes the ones who feel they cannot succeed in a college

credit class, but maybe, just maybe, they could be successful in a non-credit class. The first two groups of students are quite comfortable in this or any other learning environment. That third group, however, not only benefits from the learning outcomes, but also from an increased self-esteem. It is not uncommon for an individual to get involved in a linked class as a CE student and then convert to academic status and continue on an educational path.

PARTNERSHIP

The logistics of planning and executing these courses take careful and thoughtful consideration. Since the credit schedule goes to press before CE, program directors have the opportunity to shop in the credit schedule as if it were a mail order catalog. Courses are identified as potential concurrent enrollment offerings, and then the program director contacts the associate dean to see if there is an interest in developing this. Conversely, many associate deans or instructors contact their CE counterparts to say they think a course would be successful in a concurrent environment. From that point, a course description is developed for CE which, of course, mirrors the one already developed for college credit. Then dates are established. As stated earlier, the CE course may run the entire semester or any portion thereof. In addition to single select offerings, a CE course may be offered in blocks of time running simultaneously with academic classes. In a sociology class on leadership, three CE classes were developed, each five weeks in length. They could be taken singularly or in complete sequence.

When a partnership is developed, the academic instructor or associate dean designates a particular number of seats for CE, for example, five. That course section is then built into the CE schedule with a maximum enrollment of five. Of course, a credit class that typically fills would not be offered concurrently. During credit registration, enrollments are carefully monitored. The agreement is that if an academic class should reach maximum and need those five spots or some portion thereof which are reserved for CE, the CE maximum is lowered and those seats revert back to credit. If CE students have already registered for those five spots, the last to register are contacted that the class is no longer available, and they must be dropped or transferred to another class. In reality, if classes are being closely monitored, the CE maximum can be adjusted as credit enrollment takes place so that this situation is prevented. Also, in most cases an overload is acceptable as long as equipment is not involved. As an alternative, if there are too many CE students, a separate class can be added for CEU credit so that these students are served in addition to the original class.

Within the class, there should be no distinction among students. The same expectations are made regarding attendance, assignments, and assessment. As the class progresses, CE students sometimes decide to opt for academic credit. If the official class day has not occurred, this transition is made through the Admissions Office. Currently a plan is being developed that would allow academic credit retroactively. This most likely will involve awarding credit in a student's degree program after successful completion of a departmental exam. It is important to note that a CE student currently receives a grade of

S (satisfactory completion) or N (not completed) for the course, and these courses are listed on the student's transcript.

BENEFITS AND CONCERNS

The associate deans in the areas which offer concurrent enrollment were interviewed regarding the benefits and concerns regarding this method of course delivery. Some of the positive comments are listed below:

- Enrollment in advanced level classes was assisted by enrollment from professionals taking the class as a CE student
- Classes that may have otherwise been canceled, due to low enrollment, were held because of the enrollment from CE students
- Inquiries for college credit programs were generated from seeing a class listed in the CE schedule
- Some students who begin classes through the CE mode transition to credit programs
- CE students are not required to take college entrance exams which may intimidate students who are unsure of their college readiness
- Access to facilities and equipment is available in a wider variety of days and times
- Many CE students take classes for professional advancement and become class leaders since they are already in business and industry
- Students who are already in business and industry are less intimidated by technology and offer assistance to other students.

Because the linked sections are relatively new and change from semester to semester, issues regarding them are ongoing and resolutions are found as problems arise. The following table identifies some of these issues and their resolutions:

Identified Problem	Resolution
Faculty acceptance of concurrent enrollment: Uncommitted students Lack of attendance Watering-down of course material	Early meetings with CE leaders to discuss solutions--as the instructors began to deal with the students, their concerns proved to be unfounded. CE enrollment actually allowed low enrollment classes to make.
CE tuition lower than credit tuition	CE tuition raised to equitable level with the credit classes.
Lab supplies for CE students	Lab fees were collected for CE courses and transferred to the appropriate credit department to cover supply costs.
Two separate roll sheets generated	Do not have a resolution at this time.

Communication about the concurrent sections to adjunct faculty	Each class folder for community education classes has a memo describing procedures for CE students. Concurrent enrollment is presented for discussion at inservice.
Students wanting college credit for the course after completion of it as CE credit	CE is working with the credit areas for a solution for retroactive college credit.
Personnel from credit area to handle the logistics of concurrent enrollment	Either a coordinator or the associate dean responsible for the logistics with faculty assistance. Most details handled by the CE department.
First priority for credit students	CE student can be dropped to open space for college credit student. This process evolving as changes in funding take place.
Cost of instructor	This is in the discussion phase.

CONCLUSION

The area of concurrent enrollment has many proven and unexplored possibilities. This presentation can serve as a blueprint for setting up a new mode of educational delivery. Communication among all impacted areas is the most essential part of forming this partnership. Both the credit and community education partners must agree that this will produce mutual benefits for the departments. Once this concept is established, the students, after all, are the ones who profit from multiple delivery systems of achieving their educational goals.